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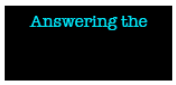

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2020 Internet Infidels Fundraising Drive / $32,460.00 of $40,000.00

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Who are the Internet Infidels?

(For contact information: click here)

Honorary President: Brett Lemoine

Presidents Emeritus: Jeffery Jay Lowder, James Still, Amanda Chesworth, Jeff Lucas, Jim Lippard, Clark Adams

Advisory Board: Richard Carrier, Tim Madigan, James Still

Board of Directors:
President & Treasurer: Ray W. Johnson
Social Media Manager: Louise Jett
Member at Large: Jason Thibodeau

Executive Director & Editor-in-Chief: Keith Augustine

Volunteers whose help is greatly appreciated:
Kiosk Editorial Review Committee: Carole Corsby, Gil Gaudia, Shelley Gaudia, Robert Shaw, Gregory S. Paul
News Wire Editor: Mark Vuletic
Special Projects: Loren Petrich

The Secular Web is supported by a number of active volunteers, and we are immensely grateful for their help. We also benefit from the contributions of numerous writers, many prominent honorary board members, and the needed financial contributions of those who support our mission.

Why do you call yourselves infidels?

There are at least two different ways to answer this question. One way is to provide a historical answer. Another is to provide a philosophical one. We'll start with the historical answer.

The Secular Web, then called the Freethought Web, was created in 1995 at Texas A&M University by cofounders Jeffery Jay Lowder and Brett Lemoine. Once they decided to create a formal organization to support the open-access resource, Lowder and Lemoine threw out some possible names for the budding organization. Lemoine proposed the name "Internet Infidels," and since it was by far the catchiest of the names proposed, they decided to adopt it, and the rest is history.

Such an innocuous origin will surely disappoint those who hoped that we intentionally chose our organizational name to co-opt a derogatory term as an act of defiance and solidarity. The Islamist use of a "derogatory" Arabic word for all non-Muslims, most commonly rendered as "infidels" in English, is entirely coincidental, and the English rendition had not become a household word in the United States until September 11, 2001, well after Internet Infidels was founded. Obviously, if "infidels" is an English rendering of an Arabic word, there must be some English referent of that term predating its use in translation.

It was the original English meaning of "infidels" that we adopted, not the meaning that subsequently became dominant. According to *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, for example, "infidel" not only means "An unbeliever with respect to a particular religion," but more relevantly to us, "One who has no religious beliefs." In addition, some people undoubtedly find the term "infidels" offensive because they don't understand the correct meaning of the term, erroneously identifying it with something like "adulterers."

Alternative meanings aside, a case could be made that the vast majority of people who find fault with us do not find fault with our choice of words, but with the positions to which those words refer. One might argue that the "humanist" euphemism for the term "atheist," for instance, only eliminates the negative connotations of the word "atheist" at the expense of clarity—by making the position that one advocates murky to believers. For instance, it's doubtful that bus advertisements adorned with the message "Why believe in a god? Just be good for goodness' sake" would have been more "offensive" simply for having been noticeably sponsored by Atheist Alliance International instead of the American Humanist Association.

What is the purpose of Internet Infidels?

Internet Infidels is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit educational organization dedicated to defending and promoting naturalistic worldview on the Internet. Naturalism is the hypothesis that nature is a closed system in the sense that it is not affected by anything outside of it (if there is anything outside of it at all). As such, naturalism entails that there are no supernatural agents, such as gods or other spirits, that intervene into nature from a transcendental realm. Internet Infidels fulfills its mission by ensuring the growth and maintenance of the Secular Web, the most comprehensive freethought resource on the Internet. The Secular Web is a virtual library of information on a variety of subjects of particular interest to those skeptical of religious claims, but valuable to others as well. For more, see our About Us page, the Naturalism and Secular Humanism sections of our Modern Library, and the naturalism entry below.

Why is Internet Infidels defined in terms of naturalism?

Invariably people want to know why we define ourselves in terms of naturalism instead of better known terms like atheism or nontheism. Simply put, naturalism represents a broader philosophical position about what sorts of things do and do not exist. Atheism, the position that there (probably) are no gods, is simply an incidental consequence of naturalism. As such, atheism is merely a position on the existence of one kind of supernatural being; unlike naturalism, atheism does not offer a complete worldview. In a society dominated by theism, the view that there is a single personal god outside of the natural order, it is not surprising that nonbelief is most widely known in terms of the negation (or at least absence) of theism. But since it is merely through historical accident that Western theism has become a particularly tenacious belief, the popularity of that belief is no reason to define oneself in contrast to it. Had some other form of supernaturalism come to dominate Western tradition, we would be no less determined to contest it.

Otherwise useful terms encompassing a wide swath of nonbelievers suffer similar drawbacks. "Freethought" (not to be confused with "free thought") and "rationalism" have historical precedent and probably constitute the widest umbrella terms. But if defined as the position that one should form one's religious positions solely on the basis of reason (i.e., arguments and evidence), and thus never on the basis of faith, revelation, tradition, or authority, either term encompasses a wide variety of positions, and thus provides little insight into what sorts of things do or do not exist. "Secularism" has the same drawback, and the additional one that it is more commonly understood to indicate political advocacy of the separation of church and state or the exclusion of religious considerations in the formation of public policy, rather than any particular philosophical stance. Terms like "skepticism" and "humanism" are also more commonly used to indicate generic doubt or a Renaissance focus on human welfare in this life, respectively, rather than skepticism about religious claims.

Consequently, we define ourselves in terms of a thesis about the overall nature of reality, and thus in opposition to *all* positions incompatible with that thesis. We take to be false *all* claims about the existence and features of an otherworldly, transcendental domain "above" or "beyond" the natural world, but nevertheless somehow able to interact with it. Insofar as a religion is a belief system that affirms the existence of the supernatural, naturalism entails that all religions are equally false. Thus the Secular Web aims not only to critique the truth of particular religious claims, but the truth of any and all religious claims. Animism, the belief that even inanimate objects like rocks and rivers are interpenetrated by nature spirits active in human affairs, is in principle no less fair game for skeptical critique than the doctrines of major world religions.

Do you have a fax? Do you have a mailing address?

Yes, both. For current contact information, please see the Contact Information page.

Is Internet Infidels a tax-exempt nonprofit organization?

Yes. All donations to Internet Infidels, Inc. are tax-deductible under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

How can I financially support Internet Infidels?

Although Internet Infidels aims to provide a unique educational resource available to anyone with Internet access at no charge, the growth and maintenance of the Secular Web depends wholly upon the generous support of our readers. Without your support, an invaluable source of information on the most important of life's questions could be lost forever, as *no other organization provides an immense virtual library of information on nonbelief.* Please see our Support Us page and give what you can to help keep the Secular Web online!

Though we are primarily an all-volunteer organization, most of the day-to-day work in maintaining the site is handled by a paid Executive Director/Scholarly Paper Editor. In addition, our robust server needs are handled by a professional host provider, and we often need to call upon the services of a professional to handle our software needs. Finally, we would like to be able to subcontract some of the most arduous tasks to paid freelancers. We therefore greatly appreciate the generous contributions of our supporters.

How can I assist Internet Infidels?

If you are a writer or scholar and feel that your work might be appropriate for publication on the Secular Web, please review our Submission Guidelines and Call for Papers pages to get a sense of the kinds of papers and book reviews we are looking for. Note that we seek different styles and have different requirements for papers depending on whether they are intended for publication in the more informal

Kiosk, or in the more scholarly Modern Library.

If you think you have a finger on the pulse of the readership of either apologetics books, or books that are likely to be of particular interest to nonbelievers, please forward us your suggestions about which books you think we ought to promote or review.

If you stay on top of current events relevant to freethinkers and reported on online news outlets, you can help us keep our News Wire up to date by submitting stories according to the News Wire Submissions Tips and Guidelines.

Finally, if you operate your own website or blog, please consider linking to us.

Can I join Internet Infidels?

No. Because Internet Infidels is not a membership organization, the only official members of Internet Infidels are those who serve on the Board of Directors.

Do you only publish content supporting a naturalistic worldview?

No. For one, it is our policy is to publish critiques of Modern Library documents that pass peer review. In addition, we have published a number of interesting original essays that challenge the veracity or tenability of metaphysical naturalism. Here are a few examples:

- The Martin-Frame Debate, a debate between Christian apologist John Frame and atheist philosopher Michael Martin.
- The Fernandes-Martin Debate, a debate between Christian apologist Phil Fernandes and atheist philosopher Michael Martin.
- The Carrier-Wanchick Debate, a debate between atheist historian Richard Carrier and Christian debater Tom Wanchick.
- Two original essays by Christian philosopher Victor Reppert: The Argument from Reason, a defense of an argument for the existence of God, and Hume on Miracles, Frequencies, and Prior Probabilities, a critique of a particular skeptical objection to miracles.
- Review of *Viable Values*, Christian philosopher Stephen Parrish's review of a nontheistic book on ethics.
- Paul Pardi's The Argument from Nonbelief: A Rejoinder, which aims to undermine the argument from nonbelief.
- Paul Herrick's Contra Carrier: Why Theism is Needed to Make Sense of Everything, a response to Richard Carrier's general critique of theism in Ten Things Wrong with Cosmological Creationism.
- James Hannam's Objection Dismissed on Appeal, a reply to Kyle Gerkin's Objections Sustained!, a critique of Lee Strobel's *The Case For Faith: A Journalist Investigates the Toughest Objections to Christianity*.
- Darek Barefoot's A Response to Richard Carrier's Review of *C.S. Lewis's Dangerous Idea*, a response to Richard Carrier's Critical Review of Victor Reppert's Defense of the Argument from Reason.

Of course, material supporting a naturalistic worldview does tend to predominate since metaphysical naturalism is the philosophical underpinning of the Secular Web.

Will you publish my critique of a Secular Web article?

We would be happy to publish your critique in the Secular Web Modern Library if it matches the scholarly quality of the original and passes peer review. Please see our Submission Guidelines before submitting your critique, and note that authors who wish to publish on the Secular Web must submit a signed Copyright Release Form prior to Secular Web publication.

See also our policy regarding links to offsite material.

Why does Internet Infidels focus so much on Christianity?

Christianity is the most popular and influential Western religion, and its adherents are the most active in publishing apologetic arguments against atheism and naturalism. Christian apologists engage us intellectually on a regular basis, directly challenging us to address their claims. Consequently, many of our authors (particularly former Christians) are better qualified to assess Christian claims than the claims of other religions, and their contributions often concern issues unique to Christianity.

Nevertheless, many of our papers address theism and supernaturalism in general, rather than Christianity in particular, and we have published some critiques of Judaism (and the Old Testament), Islam, and even Hinduism specifically, as well as particularly flourishing offshoots of Christianity like Mormonism. If you are interested in contributing an essay about any of these or other religions, please see our Submission Guidelines and Call for Papers pages.

Can I copy your material?

That depends. Some Secular Web material is in the public domain (for example, most of the articles in our Historical Library), but most of it is copyright protected. For more, see our Secular Web copyright policy.

If you still have questions about the copyright status of Secular Web material, contact us: **[click here]**

How can I get a hard copy of your material?

Many of our books are available in old-fashioned print format; please consult the Secular Web Bookstore for a list of titles and online ordering information. If the title you are interested in is not listed there and is **in print**, we would welcome your suggestion to add the title to our list. Otherwise, if the title is out of print, we suggest checking your local library. Most of our books should at least be available through interlibrary loan.

If you are trying to obtain a hard copy of a periodical, we recommend you contact the publisher directly about obtaining back copies.

I really like X. Why isn't X on the Secular Web?

The most common reason a freethought work does not appear on the Secular Web is because the work

is copyrighted, and we do not have legal permission from the copyright holder to electronically publish the material. This is why we do not have Bertrand Russell's "Why I Am Not a Christian," any of Ayn Rand's works, Dennis McKinsey's *Biblical Errancy* newsletter, or George H. Smith's *Atheism: The Case Against God*.

We maintain a list of recommended, copyrighted books for further reading. Internet Infidels also maintains a Secular Web Bookstore where you may purchase many freethought and other books for yourself from BarnesAndNoble.com, and at the same time benefit Internet Infidels. We receive commissions on each purchase made through the Bookstore.

If, however, the material you wish to see on the Secular Web is not copyrighted, or if the copyright has expired, please contact us about contributing the material to the Secular Web.

I'm writing a paper on X. Could you please send me more information on X?

We also wish we could grant requests for more information on a topic, but we currently lack the manpower to do so. We suggest trying our Google Search Engine to find information on a particular topic. Not only will our search engine provide a quicker response than a human, but often more information, too.

Can you add a link to my essay or site?

Internet Infidels often receives requests to "add a link" to a particular offsite essay or site. This is not the function of our website and we generally refuse such requests.

Note: Barring exceptional circumstances, we no longer create new links to offsite essays. Ever since we implemented our peer-review policy, material submitted for publication in the Modern Library has been refereed. Unfortunately, it has been our experience that offsite links often become invalid and/or the content changes. Thus, our peer-review efforts have sometimes been wasted. Consequently, we will no longer add links to offsite critiques from Modern Library author index pages or subject index pages. (Note: Existing links to offsite critiques may remain in place for some time to come.) Those who wish to critique such material should submit their critiques for publication on the Secular Web itself. See the Submission Guidelines and the entry for Will you publish my critique of a Secular Web article? on this page.

Do you know of any groups in my area?

If we are aware of a freethought or church-state separation organization and it has a web presence, you can find it linked from our student, local, national, or international organizations pages.

I am not a naturalist. Will you engage me in a personal dialogue or debate?

Our work writing pages, editing submissions, scanning documents, and so on precludes us from having time for one-to-one conversations. But there are several online discussion boards and e-mail lists where lively and detailed discussions take place. For more, see the Secular Web roster of related electronic mail listservs.

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